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Advancement of women

United States of America: draft resolution

Women and political participation

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming the obligations of all States to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms for all as stated in the Charter of the United Nations as well as other relevant international instruments,

Reaffirming also the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,[1] which states that everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country and the right of equal access to public service,

Recalling the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,[2] which states, inter alia, that every citizen shall have the right and opportunity to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives, to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections and to have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country,

Recalling the Convention on the Political Rights of Women,[3] which states that women shall be, on equal terms with men and without any discrimination, entitled to vote in all elections, eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies established by national law and entitled to hold public office and to exercise all public functions established by national law,

Recalling the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,[4] which states, inter alia, that States parties to the Convention shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country,

[1] Resolution 217 A (III).
[2] See resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.
[3] Resolution 640 (VII).
[4] Resolution 34/180, annex.

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Recalling also the Beijing Declaration[5] and Platform for Action,[6] the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century",[7] and the United Nations Millennium Declaration,[8] and the agreed conclusions 1997/2 of the Commission on the Status of Women on women in power and decision-making,[9]

Affirming that the empowerment and autonomous decision-making of women and their equal political, social and economic status is essential to the achievement of representative, transparent and accountable government, democratic institutions and sustainable development in all areas of life,

Affirming also that the active participation of women, on equal terms with men, at all levels of decision-making is an important factor to the achievement of equality, sustainable development, peace and democracy,

Concerned that despite general acceptance of the need for gender balance in decision-making bodies at all levels, women are still largely underrepresented at most levels of government, especially ministerial and other executive bodies, and have made little progress in increasing their representation in legislative bodies,

Recognizing that women have demonstrated considerable leadership in community and informal organizations, as well as in public office,

Recognizing also that the full and equal participation of women in the political process and decision-making will provide a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society, is needed to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning, plays a pivotal role in furthering women's equal status, including improving women's socio-economic status, and contributes to redefining political priorities and providing new perspectives on political issues,

Recognizing further that the participation of women in decision-making and in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life is negatively affected by poverty, which disproportionately affects women, particularly in developing countries,

Reaffirming the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building, and stressing the importance of their full and equal participation in all efforts to maintain and promote peace and security and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention, resolution and rebuilding of post-conflict society, as stated by the Security Council in its resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000,

Recognizing the importance of education and training from an early age in government, public policy, economics, civics, information technology and science to ensure that women develop the knowledge, skills, confidence and ethical values needed to participate fully in society and the political process,

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[5] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

[6] Ibid., annex II.

[7] Resolution S-23/3, annex.

[8] Resolution 55/2.

[9] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 7* (E/1997/27), chap. I, sect. C.1.

1. *Urges* States:

(a) To promote and protect the right of women to associate freely, express their views publicly, openly debate political policy and petition and participate in their Government at all levels, including in the formulation and implementation of government policy, on equal terms with men;

(b) To ensure equal access to education, property rights and inheritance rights, and to promote equal access to information technology and business and economic opportunities, including in international trade, in order to provide women with the tools that enable them to take part fully and equally in decision-making processes at all levels;

(c) To eliminate laws, regulations and practices that in a discriminatory manner prevent or restrict women from participating in the political process, and to adopt positive practical measures that would accelerate the achievement of equality between men and women;

(d) To counter, as appropriate, negative societal attitudes about the capacity of women to participate equally in the political process that contribute to the low proportion of women among political decision makers at the local, national and international levels;

(e) To promote the goal of gender balance in all public positions, and to take all appropriate measures to encourage political parties to ensure that women have a fair and equal opportunity to compete for all elective and non-elective public positions;

(f) To review the differential impact of their electoral systems on the political representation of women in elected bodies and to adjust or reform those systems where appropriate;

(g) To institute educational programmes, as appropriate, in the school curriculum that sensitize young people about the equal rights of women, teach civic responsibilities, promote confidence-building and counter negative societal attitudes that discourage women's political participation;

(h) To monitor progress in the representation of women through the regular collection, analysis and dissemination of data on the political participation of women and men at all levels and the progress of political parties in providing equal and fair opportunities for women to participate;

(i) To identify and propose more women candidates for senior and decision-making positions in the United Nations system and for appointment or election to intergovernmental expert and treaty bodies, and to encourage more women to apply for those positions;

(j) To promote gender balance for their delegations to United Nations and other conferences as well as all United Nations and international bodies;

(k) To encourage greater involvement of indigenous and other marginalized women in decision-making at all levels, and to address and counter the barriers faced by marginalized women in accessing and participating in politics and decision-making;

(l) To recognize that work and family responsibilities may hinder political participation, and to consider appropriate measures to reconcile work and family life;

2. *Invites* Governments, as well as the private sector, non-governmental organizations and other civil society actors:

(a) To develop mechanisms and training programmes that encourage women to participate in the electoral process and improve women's capacity to cast informed votes in free and fair elections;

(b) To encourage political parties to remove all barriers that directly or indirectly discriminate against the participation of women, in order to ensure that women have the right to participate fully at all levels of decision-making in all internal policy-making structures and nominating processes and in the leadership of political parties on equal terms with men;

(c) To encourage political parties actively to seek qualified women candidates, to provide training in conducting campaigns, public speaking, fund-raising and parliamentary procedures and to include qualified women and men on their party lists for elective office, where such lists exist;

(d) To strive to ensure that information about candidates, political party platforms, voting procedures, including voter registration, and electoral law is available to women on an equal basis with men;

(e) To support initiatives, including public-private partnerships and exchange programmes, to expand women's political skills, which include imparting or enhancing skills on how to vote, advocate, manage and govern, run for public office and serve as elected and appointed officials;

(f) To promote the participation of young people, especially women, in civil society organizations to enable them to acquire experience, skills and capacities that are transferable to the field of political participation;

(g) To encourage the establishment of, and support of existing, non-governmental organizations that provide training in leadership, decision-making, public speaking skills, use of information and communications technologies, confidence-building and political campaigning;

(h) To intensify efforts to increase the number of women in public bodies, including through research into barriers to women's access to high-level public appointments;

(i) To promote recruitment and career-development programmes that provide women with equal access to managerial, entrepreneurial, technical and leadership training, in order better to enable them to assume legislative, judicial and executive positions in government;

(j) To continue to study links between poverty eradication, empowerment and women's political participation and compile and widely disseminate good practices and lessons learned;

(k) To promote equal opportunities for women to gain appointment to advisory and decision-making bodies and promotion to senior positions through,

inter alia, reviewing the criteria for recruitment, appointment and promotion, to ensure that such criteria are relevant to and do not discriminate against women;

(l) To develop programmes to train women in using the media and information and communications technologies, in order to obtain and impart information, be informed voters, network, communicate to potential voters and raise campaign funds;

(m) To encourage the media to recognize the importance of the participation of women in the political process, provide fair and balanced coverage of male and female candidates, cover participation in women's political organizatic ns and address issues of concern to women;

3. *Urges* States and the United Nations system to increase participation of women at decision-making levels in conflict resolution and peace processes;

4. *Invites* non-governmental organizations and other actors of civil society:

(a) To advocate at all levels to enable women to influence political, economic and social decisions, process and system, to build and strengthen networks among women through information, education and sensitization activities, to increase coordination among non-governmental organizations and to establish, consistent with data protection legislation, databases on women and their qualification for dissemination to Governments, regional and international organizations and other relevant bodies;

(b) To increase coordination and cooperation in supporting women and to continue to present women's concerns and experiences to Governments, placing women's issues on the national, regional and international agendas;

5. *Requests* the Secretary-General, in his report to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fiftieth session, to include information on the implementation of the present resolution, bearing in mind that in 2006 the Commission will consider the item entitled "Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels".